

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 089 415

EA 006 002

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TITLE Research on Goals as a Means of Establishing Policy Agendas for That Public Service Called "Education".
PUB DATE Mar 74
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (59th, Chicago, Illinois, April 15-19, 1974)
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.75 HC-\$1.85 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Citizen Participation; Educational Accountability; Educational Assessment; Educational Needs; *Educational Objectives; Educational Planning; *Educational Research; *Pilot Projects; *Public Opinion; Secondary Education; Speeches
IDENTIFIERS Albuquerque; National Institute of Education; New Mexico; NIE

ABSTRACT

This paper introduces a National Institute of Education (NIE) project that is developing new methods for assessing layman's goals for education. The project also compares those goals with the goals of the professional educators. After elaborating the rationale that has guided NIE's studies of education goals, the paper describes the assumptions and procedures that make NIE's studies unique. Part one sets the context for the research by discussing the problem of tailoring public services in general (and education in particular) to achieve the goals which their clientele expect. Part two presents the framework for the research. Because of the preliminary nature of this study, its scope is limited to one site (Albuquerque, New Mexico) and to the secondary level of education. Preliminary findings indicate that it is possible to obtain valid and complete information about goals for education, even from very unsophisticated respondents. (Author/DN)

ED 089415

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RESEARCH ON GOALS AS A MEANS OF ESTABLISHING POLICY AGENDAS
FOR THAT PUBLIC SERVICE CALLED
"EDUCATION"

PREPARED FOR DELIVERY AT THE 1974 CONVENTION OF THE
AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
APRIL 15-19, 1974

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EA 006 002

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National Institute of Education or any other agency of the
U. S. Government.

In 1973, NIE initiated a series of small studies of goals for secondary education. The series covered the range from a study to design methods for eliciting and organizing the education goals of the least well-educated members of a community, to a number of national sample surveys which inquire about priorities among selected major classes of goals for education.

The AERA convention panel which this paper introduces will report on the largest single project in the NIE series, a study meant to develop new methods for assessing laymen's goals for education, and to compare laymen's goals with the goals of the professional educators who serve them. The panel will report the results, both substantive and methodological, of the project. This paper provides a statement of the problems which the research was intended to solve, and makes explicit the assumptions and analytical framework that guided it.

NIE's studies of education goals are based on the assumption that it is useful to regard education as a public service. Public services are not the property of the providers or of any subgroup of the population served. Public services are normally provided by professionals, but citizens ultimately hold the providers accountable for the appropriateness of the selection and design of services, as well as for the technical quality of their delivery. Thus, the definition of goals for any public service Institution determines what services will be delivered, and to whom. Thus, setting public policy process. People who consume the service will be well or badly served, depending on whether

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goals for the service are defined in ways consistent with their clients' aspirations.

Few existing studies of education goals explicitly recognize the importance of the adequacy of the goal-setting process for the quality of public services that schools provide. Though many education goal studies are based on opinion survey, most analysis focuses on identifying modal or dominant concerns. They pay little attention to identifying areas and sources of diversity of education goals among the consumers of educational services. Other reports on education goals reflect the consensus of community groups and representative bodies which reach agreement on abstractly stated goals at a high order of generality. Still other studies reflect consensus among professional educators about the schooling experiences children should have and the traits children should emerge with from a given level of education. Most efforts to state educational goals, be they opinion surveys or educators' formulations of their professional values, assume that goals should be based on consensus and should reflect generally accepted values. That assumption can have a powerful effect on the diversity of educational programs and the responsiveness of educational institutions. Because goals are expected to reflect consensus, there is little reason to look beneath unexceptionable generalities to see whether they mask

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disagreement about what particular services should be provided. And there is surely no reason to go in search of any distinctive statements of educational goals that might be made by groups which are not normally articulate or assertive enough to participate in elite discussions about the goals of schooling.

We think that the statement of goals for education, in a way that reflects the full range and diversity of aspirations in the population, is a crucial task in the construction of responsive and effective educational policy. This paper elaborates the rationale that has guided NIE's studies of education goals, and describes the assumptions and procedures that make NIE's studies unique. Part One sets the context for our research by discussing the problem of tailoring public services in general (and education in particular) to achieve the goals which their clienteles expect. Part Two presents the framework for the research. Results of the research will be presented in the other papers in this panel.

Part One: Communicating Between Laymen and Professionals about Agendas for Public Service Institutions in General and Public Education in Particular

The role of government in people's lives is continually growing. Complex societies and economies require growing amounts of regulation; many services and activities that were historically

provided by diverse private sources have become the domain of public agencies. In the process, services which were previously as varied and competitive as the private firms that provided them have become standardized and inflexible. All this has happened at a time when society is becoming more, rather than less diverse. Despite demands that all groups be treated on the basis of formal equality, each minority or interest group has its own view of how services should be delivered.

Though public services have always been standardized, the full implications of service centralization and uniformity are only now coming clear. These implications include: 1) the fact that services designed for a broad aggregate of clients necessarily meet modal or average needs, and ignore the diverse needs of special subsets of clients; 2) that public service agencies are typically staffed by professionals whose training, social status, and career orientations distinguish them from their clients and dispose them to attend more to the technical aspects of service delivery than to the changing or special needs of consumers; and 3) that clients who want to change the way public services are delivered have only the crudest of tools for expressing and enforcing their aspirations. Though elections are supposed to provide policy guidance, their results can seldom be interpreted in programmatic terms. Candidates for office must take positions on many issues, and the simple fact that one man was elected cannot be interpreted as proving that voters preferred all of his positions to all of his opponents' positions.

It is logically prior to questions of administrative efficiency or political accountability. To be responsive to clients' aspirations, professionals must first have a complete and accurate understanding of what those aspirations are.

Clients and professionals--especially in public services as complex as education--are quick to admit that their communication is difficult and often incomplete. There are many good reasons why this is so. They include the following:

1) The fact that clients of public services, including education, are generally not very articulate about what they want. It takes a great deal of time and concentration to make a full and systematic statement of what is wanted from a public service. Professionals themselves seldom formulate their goals explicitly, but their direct control over services means that they needn't be articulate to get what they want. But unless laymen articulate their goals explicitly, professionals have no way of knowing the nature or range of outcomes their clients expect from a service, and what priorities they assign to the various outcomes. With the exception of the occasional lone-wolf activist, the only people who make sustained efforts to articulate their aspirations are interest group spokesmen. And there is good reason to believe that they, as well as school board members and other formal representatives, are as unlike their lay neighbors as the professionals are.^{1/}

Tax and bond elections do present unambiguous choices, but an electoral decision to increase or deny funding is not eloquent about the finer points of public service preference.

Though some clients express their aspirations through personal contacts with officials and through pressure groups, those routes are usually restricted to the well-connected and the sophisticated. Few clients have personal access to public officials, and not many more are consulted by interest group spokesmen who claim to represent them.

These things have been true for a long time, but they become items of graver concern as the scope of government increases. It is now clear that individuals are losing their ability to enforce their desires over a growing range of services. It is also clear that those services cannot be economically returned to small private ones, but how to help government deliver them responsively and flexibly.

How do monolithic public service institutions discover and satisfy the aspirations of their modal clients? How do they recognize diversity in their clienteles so they can organize to meet as wide a range of aspirations as their resources permit? These questions can occupy armies of scholars, advocates, and administrative innovators, and this paper does not claim to handle all aspects of them. This paper is concerned with a small part of the problem, i.e., the articulation and communication of clients' aspirations to the professionals who provide public services. This formulation of the problem is important because

2) The fact that laymen and professionals often assume adversary positions that further retard communication. Laymen usually express their complaints ad hoc, making no effort to place them in a broader context of general aspirations for the public service. Thus, professionals come to regard complaints and the people who make them as capricious and hostile. On the other hand, professionals' real expertise and their frequently paternalistic "bedside manner" often make them appear distant and arrogant toward laymen.

The result is that laymen and professionals often meet in an atmosphere of mutual distrust, which does not promote free and open exploration of the rationales behind laymen's complaints or professionals' decisions.

3) The fact that when professionals want to understand clients' aspirations, they are forced to use incomplete and potentially biased sources of evidence. These include other professionals' views and the proffered opinions of official or self-appointed interest group spokesmen. They also include the decisions of representative bodies like school boards, and the results of elections and public opinion polls. None of these sources provides unbiased evidence about clients' aspirations.

The literature on interest groups cited above provides evidence to the effect that their leaders' relationship with the rank and file is analogous to the relationship between public service professionals and their clients. Interest group leaders take positions on behalf of group members, who are only

Intermittently interested in the group's business, and not very articulate about their preferences. Interest group leaders must create coherent policy positions, and sell them simultaneously to their own members and to officeholders and the public. Thus, interest group activities are revealing about leaders' interpretation of the members' aspirations. But those interpretations themselves suffer from the familiar communications gap between professionals and laymen.

As Ziegler (1972) has demonstrated, school boards tend to be: a) composed of people whose education and social status are generally much higher than the clients they represent; b) more likely to take direction from professionals than to express independent sets of concerns; and c) unlikely to see themselves as elicitors or transmitters of the special concerns of subgroups of the population.

Public opinion polls, even honest and technically sound ones, are also deficient as ways of articulating the full range of clients' aspirations. Polls must begin with questions and response categories formulated in advance. Responses to poll questions only reveal the order of preferences among the questions that were asked. If the items themselves are written in ignorance of the nature and range of clients' aspirations, poll results add little new information.

As Lowi (1972) demonstrates professionals in search of information about clients' aspirations may take the fact that clients can respond to poll questions as evidence that the questions touch on important topics. In truth, the questions may be trivial, may force clients to choose between services that they cannot easily distinguish, or may confound issues which respondents distinguish in their own minds. Thus, poll results often only confuse the effort to discover what clients want public service institutions to deliver.

People can respond to questions about the relative importance of programs or objectives, but if those statements are formulated by professionals they will reveal very little about the schedule of preferences that underlies clients' responses. Clearly, if the nature and range of clients' aspirations is unknown, no device that assigns priorities to preformulated items can be of much use. Thus, elections and other fair democratic processes, even those that engage the interest of many clients, can produce only fragmentary clues about the nature, range, and priorities of clients' aspirations.

None of these difficulties is wholly the fault of public service providers. The communication gaps between them and their clients are results of the professionals' technical role on the one hand and the fact that clients are not fully articulate on the other. Though many professionals like to do their jobs without interference from laymen, there is no reason to assume that they would refuse to hear clear statements of their clients' aspirations, or that they would always resist implementing them.

The problem is in the nature of the professional's relationship with his clients: even if he wanted to, the professional would have few tools with which to wring guidance from his clients; and those tools he has produce unreliable results.

It takes little effort to show how this argument applies to public education. Public school systems are virtually monopolistic providers of educational services; they offer quite standard packages of services, and the variety they do provide is determined far more by budgetary considerations than by the diversity of aspirations in the school clientele. Schools are run by professionals who have their own distinctive views about education policy. Professionals also have reasons to want to deliver services that satisfy clients' aspirations as thoroughly as possible, and some actively seek guidance from clients. But such efforts are too intermittent and short-lived to promote general expression of laymen's preferences.

The only natural device for satisfying public service aspirations without articulating them fully is a free and functionally perfect market, which allows clients to make an infinite variety of concrete choices. That clearly does not exist in education. And reforms like vouchers and free schools offer too few alternatives to permit truly effective market choices. As long as educational services are packaged and delivered by large institutions there will be a need for articulation of clients' aspirations so that responsive programs can be provided.

If clients cannot spontaneously make a full statement of their goals for education, perhaps some artificial device can facilitate it. Such a device would have to help clients to scan their expectations broadly, and to express them in terms that the professionals who run education institutions can understand.

Part Two: A Framework for Research

Full communication between laymen and professionals requires three things: first, that laymen express their goals accurately, comprehensively, and in their proper order of priorities; second, that some medium exist whereby laymen's goals can be brought to professionals' attention; and third, that the professionals be able to understand laymen's goals well enough to be able to act on them.

In the spirit of taking first things first, NIE has started a program of research to help laymen and professionals articulate their goals for education. To conduct that research, it is necessary to start with a set of concepts, assumptions and specifications about how laymen's and professionals' goals for education should be assessed. That will be the business of this part. Section A defines the necessary terms and concepts; Section B outlines the assumptions that underlie the research; Section C discusses the characteristics which statements of goals must have if they are to promote useful communication between professionals and laymen; and Section D discusses the potential uses of the results.

A. Concepts and Definitions

Goals for education are the preferred outcomes which persons or groups want educational institutions to produce.

Goals can be categorized in many ways, but the most important set of distinctions is probably among student characteristic goals (desired characteristics such as knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed in students as a result of their exposure to school programs and milieu); social goals (the desired aggregate effects of achieving the student goals--such as an educated citizenry or a skilled labor force); and process goals (benefits, other than those subsumed under social goals, which the society draws from the very existence of schools. These could include services such as child custody, public employment, and community entertainment.)

In any of those categories, goals can range from explicit behavioral objectives to more diffuse and general hopes about affecting life styles and values.

Goal Structures: A goal structure is the whole set of goals which a person (or group) desires education to achieve. The structure is composed of particular goals, arranged in categories and ordered according to priorities.

Education Professionals are people who make their living as practitioners, administrators, or researchers in or about educational institutions. This includes the paid staff of education interest groups, and political decisionmakers such as school board members. (For the sake of discussion "professionals" will be treated as a single group. However, the research is explicitly designed to recognize that professionals can differ sharply among themselves about goals for education).

Clients are the people on whom professionals depend for their funding and political support. This definition includes all adults who pay taxes to support schools or are enfranchised to vote in school board elections. It also includes those students who are old enough to organize to facilitate or disrupt school operations. It does not include grade school pupils who (to date at least) are unable to concert their actions in making demands about the schools. (As in the case of professionals, we use the generic term "clients" only for the convenience of discussion. The whole point of this research is ultimately to distinguish among groups of clients.)

B. Assumptions

The idea that clients' educational goals can be elicited and understood through empirical research tests on some assumptions that should be made explicit. They are:

1. That clients have goals and aspirations for the outcomes of education. Though it is possible to imagine that clients have no goals for education it is far more plausible to hold that they have some expectations, however vague, about what schools should achieve. The fact that clients seldom make detailed statements of what they want suggests that their goal structures are not well organized. We assume, however, that client's goals can be articulated and organized without doing violence to their real content.

2. We do not yet know which groups hold similar or different goals. Thus, our methods must be open to such possibilities as: a) that all laymen's goals for education are the same; b) that groups of laymen differ widely about goals; c) that professionals' goals are all the same; d) that professionals differ widely about goals; e) that laymen's goals are identical to professionals'; and f) that laymen's and professionals' goals are very different.
3. Since there is no reason to expect that laymen's and professionals' goals correspond exactly, it is at least possible that laymen have some aspirations which professionals are not aware of and which, consequently, are never reflected in the process by which educational policy is formulated.

C. Characteristics of the Needed Information about Goal Structures

Though we have assumed that laymen have goals for education, and that those goals can be fit into structures that professionals can understand, we can never hope to observe those goals directly. Goals, like attitudes and other psychological constructs, can only be measured indirectly from the behavior or responses they produce. Researchers can summarize their measures with indexes and characterize a person whose responses have been measured by building a profile. In the present case, to characterize the goals of a person or group, we must construct goal profiles. Such profiles must reflect the clients' goals accurately; they must reflect clients' goals in ways that are unbiased, comprehensive, efficient,

hierarchical, ordered according to priorities, and able to reflect changes in goal structures over time. The need for each of these characteristics is explained below.

1. Unbiased. The data must reflect the style and content of clients' goals accurately. That means that goals must be defined in terms that reflect respondents' thinking. Their thinking must not be channelled or directed by the imposition of terms or frameworks invented by researchers or derived from the current professional literature.
2. Comprehensive: Statements of goal structures must cover the whole range of outcomes which clients expect education to produce. It is likely that some people conceptualize goals more broadly than others. Thus, it is as important to derive evidence about the range of goals as it is to get unbiased statements of the particular goals.
3. Efficient: Goals structures must be parsimonious; they must cover the range of goals with the smallest number of mutually exclusive categories. Goals which respondents see as overlapping or synonymous should be consolidated into more general categories. On the other hand, goals which respondents see as essentially diverse should be kept separate.

4. Hierarchical. Profiles of goal structures must distinguish different levels of generality. As the section on definitions discussed, goals can be very general (and thus manifest in feelings about many individual school programs or activities) or very particular. In a sense, particular goals (preferences for specific programs) represent hypotheses about how to achieve general goals.

We assume that even the simplest goal structure has some hierarchy, i.e., that even those clients who only express their aspirations in the most immediate programmatic terms have some basic sets of preferences from which the expressed desires are derived. But we do not assume that all clients' basic goals for education are equally abstract, or that all people would put given particular goals into the same general categories. Thus, the establishment of categories and hierarchies of goals must be done empirically, with as little *à priori* structuring by researchers as possible.

5. Ordered according to priorities - Individuals may differ about the relative importance of goal statements and of general categories of goals. These differences may arise from two sources: 1) divergent value preferences, which cause respondents to order identically-defined items differently, and 2) different formulations of goal categories, which would produce divergent ratings because

respondents were rating essentially non-comparable sets of items. A complete goal profile must therefore contain information about the respondents' priorities among goal categories as well as about his scheme for placing particular goal statements into categories.

6. Able to reflect changes in goal structures over time.

The more specific goal statements may be highly dependent on the respondents' current level of interest in school issues, on the content of newspaper coverage of educational policy debates, and other short-term phenomena. Yet the more basic goals might be anchored more firmly in stable values or lifestyle preferences. Further, the general categories of educational goals which the respondents think are relatively unimportant may be quite changeable, both in terms of their hierarchical structure and their priority rank.

A full understanding of clients' educational goal structures must therefore include some notion of the stability of the overall profile of the composition and priority of the goals within it.

D. Implications

Information consistent with the preceding conceptual framework will permit researchers to construct a profile which represents a respondent's goal structure. Each respondent can be profiled according to:

- The range and content of his goals for education
- The content and hierarchical structure of the categories into which he placed those goals, and

- The priorities he established among goal categories

Though the policy significance of knowing any one respondent's goal profile is slight, it is an indispensable step toward determining which groups of clients share goal profiles and are distinct from other groups. Establishing such profiles is purely a matter of analyzing results collected in constructing individuals' profiles. That analysis will consist of three separate tasks:

- 1) Identifying and distinguishing groups of laymen according to similarities and differences in their goal profiles.
- 2) Identifying and distinguishing groups of professionals according to similarities and differences in their goal profiles.
- 3) Determining, again from similarities and differences in goal profiles, which groups of laymen share goals with groups of professionals, which groups of laymen have goal structures which no professionals share, and which groups of professionals have goal structures which no laymen share.

These tasks tie together our substantive concerns. The first task identifies the areas of conflict and consensus (about relevant goals, their perceived logical relationships with one another, and their priorities) within the lay population. It provides evidence about the nature and range of goals which laymen think secondary school programs should try to satisfy, and identifies those groups with distinctive interests.

The second task identifies areas of conflict and consensus among professionals. The third integrates all the findings. It can indicate:

- a) Whether clients (in general or any group or groups) have goals for education which professionals (in general or any group or groups) do not recognize.
- b) Whether all professionals or some group of them have goals for secondary education which some or all laymen do not recognize.
- c) Whether professionals in general accord the same priorities to all goal categories that laymen do; conversely, whether there are groups of clients whose priorities are not reflected by any group of professionals, or vice-versa.
- d) Whether some or all clients categorize goals differently than professionals do.

(Circumstances where groups differ about the content, range or priorities of goals are familiar problems for administrative and political theory.) But circumstances where groups categorize goals differently are not treated. We think they are important: to make the point, let us provide a simple concrete example about secondary school policy.

Consider the following diagram, which indicates that both professionals and clients identify five goals ("providing knowledge about hygiene," "maintaining students' physical fitness," "running an intramural sports program,"

"promoting active student government," and "conducting a program of interscholastic athletics.") And both clients and professionals put those goals into two general categories ("promote good health among students," and "teach students the joys of competition.")

CATEGORY		
	Health	Competition
Clients	Hygiene Fitness Intramural Sports	Student government Interscholastic athletics
Professionals	Hygiene Fitness	Student government Interscholastic athletics Intramural Sports

But clients and professionals differ about the proper category for "running an intramural sports program."

Assume that professionals do not know how clients' categories are constructed. If clients express satisfaction with "health" programs but want more "competition," professionals may inadvertently make an inappropriate response. If professionals decide to emphasize intramural sports as a means of strengthening the "competition" category, clients will see it as an unnecessary enhancement of the already-satisfactory health category.

This case exemplifies an important general point: that professionals' ability to understand and respond to their clients' aspirations depends on knowing the ways in which clients categorize

particular goals. Some goals, of course, are expressed very explicitly (e.g., "fire the coach," or "teach calculus,") but many are formulated abstractly, e.g., ("emphasize vocational training.") Satisfaction of goals which clients express abstractly requires that professionals know how their general goal categories are composed.)

Such findings are simply information; there is no guarantee that professionals will consider them in either formulating policy or explaining school programs to clients. But they are indispensable if professionals and clients are to communicate effectively about one another's goals. Assuming that there are positive incentives for professionals to deliver what clients want, it should have an impact on the responsiveness of public school policy.

Conclusion

The study on which this panel is based is intended to produce empirical data with which to explore the ideas outlined in the preceding sections. It is not intended to settle all our substantive questions about communication between laymen and professionals, but it will provide evidence about the likely usefulness of pursuing the inquiry outlined here.

Because of the preliminary nature of the study, a number of decisions were made to limit its scope and thereby simplify problems of design and analysis. The study is in progress in only one site (Albuquerque, New Mexico) and it is dealing with relatively small samples of respondents. It is also focusing on the goals of one kind of educational institution--secondary or high schools--rather than on the goals of the entire public educational system.

As the preceding sections have argued, the results of research on laymen's and professionals' goals for education can have considerable theoretical and policy significance. But before we conduct elegant tests of hypotheses or intervene in relationships between professionals and clients, we must first determine whether it is possible to measure educational goals in ways that do not violate the constraints and assumptions of our conceptual framework.

To measure educational goals, we must be able to obtain detailed interview data from individual respondents. This requires that respondents find our questions about goals meaningful, and that they be able to perform the abstract conceptual tasks required to place goal statements in hierarchies and assign priorities.

Because there is no well-developed methodology between the extremes of opinion surveys and clinical interviews, and because little is known about how to facilitate respondents' performing abstract conceptual tasks, we were forced to develop our own approach. We embarked on a pilot study in which we test and tinker with interviewing formats and instruments. Though it relies initially on the researchers' judgment about what is working and what is not (i.e., what is producing a free and complete but not labored or contrived flow of information from the respondent) the pilot study embodied a systematic process for evaluating interviewing formats (places, times, and physical arrangements for interviewing) and instruments (schedules of questions, probes, and examples.) Potential approaches were tested on small numbers of respondents. Those which led to easy rapport between respondent and interviewer, and produced a good flow of relevant information, were refined and tested on larger pilot samples.

After several months of pilot studies, we are convinced it is possible to obtain valid and complete information about goals for education, even from very unsophisticated respondents. On the strength of those pilot results, we have established a research methodology and are preparing to apply it on a larger scale in two sites. The research other papers in the panel will report our preliminary results.

NIE's ultimate research objective is to devise a methodology which is simple enough for local education agencies to apply in assessing the educational goals of their own clienteles, yet is both valid and reliable. The methodology produced by the pilot study appears to have high validity and reliability, but the methodology is not simple. In its present form the methodology can be applied only by a highly trained staff of research designers, interviewers, and data analysts. It requires complex and expensive repeated interviews with respondents.

The reason for the present complexity of the method is the overriding concern that the statements of educational goals reflect the full range and richness of respondents' own goals for education. With further development, it should be possible to design a single survey instrument which, by relying on the basic categories of education goals discovered in the present study, can accomplish the same purposes as the complex set of repeated interviews required by the present methodology. With such an instrument, most local education agencies could assess the goals of their own clienteles without straining their own financial or staff resources. The concluding paper in the panel will report the results of one attempt to adapt a standard survey techniques to examine education goal questions.

FOOTNOTES

1/ Evidence from many fields agrees that laymen do not see policy issues the same way as do the professionals and interest group leaders who represent them. That has been shown to be the case among party leaders and followers (McCloskey et. al. 1960 and Stokes, 1966), local political leaders and their clienteles (Prothro and Grigg, 1964), and interest group leaders and their rank-and-file (Luttberg and Ziegler, 1966), and city planners and city residents (Todd, 1972).

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